

SPANISH STATE

Women's programmes

In the Spanish Prisons there are no widespread intervention programmes for women who have suffered gender violence within intimate partnerships and are in prison.

However, there are several prisons that are developing some initiatives for women inmates. The prisons where these programmes are being implemented are: Albalote (Granada), Alcalá de Guadaria (Sevilla) and Algeciras (Cádiz). The women's prison Madrid I mujeres is planning the implementation of in prison programmes on gender violence during the upcoming months.

On the other hand, the General Secretary of Penitentiary Institutions developed, in April 2009, an Action Plan on equality between women and men inside prison. The aims of the Action Plan are to foster gender equality inside prison, to eradicate situations of discrimination against women and to ensure successful social reinsertion of women once they are released. The Plan has 4 main lines of action. The fourth one is to promote the eradication of gender violence and mitigate its consequences and aims:

- To reduce vulnerability of women inmates of suffering situation of gender violence and/or dependency
- To develop specific programmes for women who had suffered gender violence before entering into prison
- To develop specific programmes for inmate perpetrators of gender violence

Each of the objectives foresees specific actions to be implemented inside prison tackling both prison staff and women inmates.

Men's programmes

In the prisons depending of the Spanish government, there is a programme focused on the treatment of men who have been perpetrators of violence within the family. This programme was carried out for the first time in 2003, and reviewed in 2005. The result of this revision is the current programme, called *Treatment Programme in Prison for perpetrators in the family context*.

Treatment Programme in Prison for perpetrators in the family context

This programme intends to provide therapy to and rehabilitation of male perpetrators of domestic violence who are in prison. Currently this programme tackles men who have been, reiteratively or occasionally, violent with their partners or ex-partners.

The programme offers psychotherapy to male inmates, from a cognitive-behavioural approach. Although the programme is not based on a feminist approach, it does accept that men perpetrators are not ill persons with mental health problems and that circumstances such as drug or alcohol addictions are not the cause of the violence but just an aggravating factor. In addition, during the development of the programme, gender issues are also tackled. In this sense, gender stereotypes, prejudices and attitudes towards women and men and their relationships are questioned, and the justification of violence against women is specifically approached and discussed. Furthermore, the programme not only questions the gender role of women but also the ideas and images regarding masculinity.

This programme is developed in the Spanish male prisons. In 2005 the programme started in 18 prisons and in 2008 it was run in 46 prisons. It is implemented by psychologists from the Penitentiary Institutions. It is recommended that the therapists of each group are of both genders.

Each programme lasts for one year and targets a maximum of 12 inmates per group. In 2005 (first implementation of the current programme) 171 inmates took part in this programme and in 2008, 744 prisoners participated. Thus, 1150 men of Spanish prisons have participated in this programme.

The participation is voluntary and is based on a demand of the male prisoner. In the start of the programme, the perpetrator and the therapists sign an agreement, stating and accepting the commitment, duties and rights.

It is a programme mainly based on group sessions, although in the first phase of the programme there is one individual session, in the middle of it there may be others to follow-up the process of each men, and at its end, there is one interview as a way of closing the programme. The group sessions last for a minimum of 2 hours, but usually can reach 4. They are delivered weekly, although there are prisons in which 2 sessions per week are carried out.

As said, the participants have to ask voluntarily to participate in the programme. Then, in the beginning of it, the therapist value the possibilities that each man has of finalising the program, and depending on this evaluation the group is composed. The selection criteria that usually use take into account the motivation, the intellectual capacity, the existence of any psychopathology, the length of the sentence and other specific penitentiary circumstances. In fact, from the Penitentiary Institutions it is preferred the participation of those perpetrators being about to finish their sentence.

The programme is organised in two parts: evaluation of the participants, and treatment.

The evaluation is a complex part, and it is based on both psychological tests (Test to foresee the risk of new violent actions -VRAG, Questionnaire to measure the hostility -BDHI-, Personality tests as MCMI II, MMPI 2, BFQ, Motivation test - Likert-) and an individual interview. This initial evaluation intends to provide accurate information about the starting point of the inmate.

The first group session of the programme aims at promoting the cohesion of the group, including the presentations of participants and therapists, the objectives of the programme and the commitments of all.

The treatment part is developed through group sessions, following 10 thematic sections, with different units in each one. Each unit is approached during a variable number of sessions, which depends on the development and progress of the group and the number of participants.

The sections and its units are the following:

1. Acceptance of responsibility (acceptance of responsibility; identification and expression of emotions; empathy with the victim; cognitive distortions)
2. Emotional control (anxiety control; thoughts and jealous behaviour; anger and resentment).
3. Abilities training (relationship and communication abilities; training in solving problems; sexual education)
4. Closing (positive style of life; relapse prevention)
5. Final group session of balance.

Therapists not only evaluate the participants but also the programme itself. In this way, after each session the therapists fill-in an assessment fiche, gathering the activities developed in the session, the participation of the inmates and the difficulties being faced. These fiches are sent to the Penitentiary Administration.

In 2008 there was a research¹ aimed at evaluating in prison treatment programmes for men perpetrators of gender violence being developed in Spanish prisons. The main conclusions of the research point out that there were significant modifications of the cognitive bias regarding women's inferiority and the understanding of violence as a valid way to face daily difficulties. In addition, there was a substantial decrease of the psychopathological symptoms such as impulsivity and anger. There was as well an increase of self-esteem. On the other hand, the conclusions also highlight that inmates with high levels of impulsivity and depressive symptoms had less poorer therapeutic results.

¹ Echeburúa, E; Fernández, J. Evaluación de un programa de tratamiento en prisión de hombres condenados por violencia grave contra la pareja. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*. 2009, vol. 9, N°1, pp. 5-20. ISSN1697-2600 (Online on the 03 September 2009 at: http://www.aepc.es/ijchp/articulos_pdf/ijchp-306.pdf)